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THE BETROTHAL.

BEING THE FIRST PART OF THE ESPOUSALS.

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THE
ANGEL IN THE HOUSE

THE ESPOUSALS

Coventry Kersey Lighton Patmore

Par la grace infinie, Dieu les mist au monde ensemble.

Rousier des Dames.



BOSTON:
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PROLOGUE.

THE PROLOGUE.

HER sons pursue the butterflies,
Her baby daughter mocks the doves
With throbbing coo: in his fond eyes
She's Venus with her little Loves;
Her step's an honour to the earth,
Her form's the native-land of grace,
And, lo, his coming lights with mirth
Beauty's metropolis, her face!
Of such a lady proud's the lord;
And that her happy bosom knows:
She takes his arm without a word,
In lanes of laurel and of rose.

Ten years to-day has she been his ;

He but begins to understand,

He says, the dignity and bliss

She gave him when she gave her hand :

And she replies, He disenchants

The Past ! and, flatter'd, answers he,

For him the Present nothing wants

But briefness to be ecstasy !

He lauds her grace ; Its fullest glow

The years, which dim all else, defer :

She laughs and says, 'Twere always so

Were all wives loved as he loves her.

Therewith her soft arm presses his

Against her fond, maternal breast :

He answers, Each new honour is

The sum, my Sweet, of all the rest !

And whilst the Wood-dove, mocking, coo'd,

They praised the days that they'd been

wed,

At cost of those in which they woo'd,

Till every thing was three times said ;
And words were growing vain, when Briggs,
Factotum, Butler, Footman, Groom,
Who help'd the gardener, fed the pigs,
Preserv'd the game, and drove the
brougham,
Brought in the wish'd-for post-bag, fill'd,
Like Fame's puff'd cheek, with Vaughan's
success.

A letter from the Laureate thrill'd
Her voice that read it ; but the Press,
Daily and weekly, death-notes toll'd :
Some call'd him harsh, but full of fire,
Some call'd him musical, but cold ;
And earn'd his wife's contempt and ire.
He laugh'd ; but, seeing his Poem named
With Holofernes Brobdignag,
And nine new Miltons more, exclaim'd,
With patience that began to flag,
“ I, servant to the Truth in times

“When gaudy words are more than wit,
“And diligent in all my rhymes
“The truth with truest phrase to fit,
“Am unsolicitous to earn
“Mock laurels, and amaze with show
“The vulgar, who will nothing learn
“But that which they already know.
“Yet Love, requiring language high
“Beyond our tongue’s extremest reach,
“May class me, to the careless eye,
“With modern mountebanks of speech:
“But we’ll our hearts in patience keep,
“Till this indignity be past,
“Sure that the worthless oyster-heap
“Shall waste, and show the pearls at
last.”

With boasting calm’d, his “Second Book,”
For this tenth festival kept close,
He thus commenced, while o’er them shook
The laurel married with the rose.

2.

“The pulse of War, whose bloody heats
“Sane purposes insanely work,
“Now with fraternal frenzy beats,
“And binds the Christian to the Turk,
“And shrieking fifes”—

3.

But, with a roar,
In rush'd the Loves; the tallest roll'd
A hedgehog from his pinafore,
Which saved his fingers: Baby, bold,
Touch'd it, and stared, and scream'd for life,
And stretch'd her hand for Vaughan to
kiss,
Who hugg'd his Pet, and ask'd his Wife,
“Is this for love, or love for this?”
But she turn'd pale, for now the beast
Found stock-still in the rabbit-trap,
And feigning so to be deceased,

And laid by Walter in her lap,
Unglobed himself, and show'd his snout,
And fell, scatt'ring the Loves amain,
With shriek, with laughter, and with shout;
And peace at last restored again,
The Bard, who this untimely hitch
Bore with a calm magnanimous,
(The hedgehog kick'd into a ditch,
And Venus sooth'd,) proceeded thus:

I.

BEULAH.

THE ACCOMPANIMENTS.

I.

The Song of Songs.

THE pulse of War, whose bloody heats
Sane purposes insanely work,
Now with fraternal frenzy beats,
And binds the Christian to the Turk,
And shrieking fifes and braggart flags,
Through quiet England, teach our breath
The courage corporate that drags
The coward to heroic death.
Too late for song! Who henceforth sings,
Must fledge his heavenly flight with more

Song-worthy and heroic things
Than hasty, home-destroying War.
While might and right are not agreed,
And battle thus is yet to wage,
So long let laurels be the meed
Of soldier as of poet sage :
But men await the Tale of Love,
And weary of the Tale of Troy ;
Lift me, O Muse, myself above,
To win the honour and the joy !

II.

Orpheus.

THE music of the Sirens found
Ulysses weak, though cords were
strong;

But happier Orpheus stood unbound,

And shamed it with a sweeter song.

His mode be mine. Of Heav'n I ask,

May I, with heart-persuading might,

Pursue the Poet's sacred task

Of superseding faith by sight,

Till ev'n the witless Gadarene,

Preferring Christ to swine, shall know

That life is sweetest when it's clean:

To prouder folly let me show

Earth by divine light made divine;

And let the saints, who hear my word,
Say, "Lo, the clouds begin to shine
"About the coming of the Lord!"

III.

The Sentences.

1.

SPIRIT of knowledge grant me this,
A simple heart and subtle wit,
To praise the thing whose praise it is
That all which can be praised is it.

2.

What seems to us for us is true.
The planets have no proper light;
And yet, to subtlest mortal view,
The primal stars are not so bright.

3.

If one slight column counterweighs

The ocean, 'tis the Maker's law,

Who deems obedience better praise

Than sacrifice of erring awe.

IDYL I.

BEULAH.

1.

WHAT fortune did my heart foretell?
What shook my spirit, as I woke,
Like the vibration of a bell
Of which I had not heard the stroke?
Was it some happy vision shut
From memory by the sun's fresh ray?
Was it that linnet's song; or but
A natural gratitude for day?
Or the mere joy the senses weave,
A wayward ecstasy of life?

Then I remember'd, yester-eve
I won Honoria for my wife.

2.

Forth riding, while as yet the day
Was dewy, watching Sarum Spire,
Still beckoning me along my way,
And growing every minute higher,
I reach'd the Dean's. Her blind was down,
Though nine then struck. My bride
to be!

And had she rested ill, my own,
With thinking, (oh my heart!) of me?
I paced the streets; two pistols chose,
To guard my now important life
When riding late from Sarum Close;
At noon return'd. Good Mrs. Fife,
To my, "The Dean, is he at home?"
Said, "No, Sir; but Miss Honor is;"
And straight, not asking if I'd come,

Announced me, "Mr. Felix, Miss,"
To Mildred, in the Study. There
We talk'd, she working. We agreed
The day was fine; the Fancy-Fair
Successful; "Did I ever read
"De Genlis?" "No." "I must. She had
heard
"I was engaged." "To whom?" "Miss
Fry.
"Was it the fact?" "No!" "On my
word?"
"What scandal people talk'd!" "Would I
"Hold out this skein of silk." So pass'd
I know not how much time away.
"How were her sisters?" "Well." At
last
I summon'd heart enough to say,
"I hoped to have seen Miss Churchill too."
"Miss—who?" laugh'd Mildred; "What
is this?"

“ I said, and so indeed it's true
“ Last night you quarrell'd? Here she
is ! ”

3.

She enter'd, like a morning rose
Ruffled with rain, and made me blush:
Her crown once more was on her brows;
And, with a faint, indignant flush,
And fainter smile, she gave her hand,
But not her eyes, then sate apart,
As if she'd have me understand
The honour of her vanquish'd heart:
But I drew humbly to her side;
And she, well pleased, perceiving me
Abash'd again before the pride
Of her unconquer'd majesty,
Once and for all put it away:
The faint flush pass'd; and, thereupon,
Her loveliness, which rather lay
In light than colour, smiled and shone,

Till sick was all my soul with bliss :

Or was it with remorse and ire

That grace so worshipful as this

Should not have set its heaven higher ?

II.

AUNT MAUDE.

THE ACCOMPANIMENTS.

I.

The Capture.

WATCH how a bird, that captived
sings,

The cage set open, first looks out,
Yet fears the freedom of his wings,
And now withdraws, and flits about,
And now looks forth again; until,
Grown bold, he perches here and there,
And now attains the window-sill,
And now confides himself to air.
The maiden so, from love's free sky
In chaste and prudent counsels caged,

But longing to be loosen'd by
Her suitor's faith declared and gaged,
When blest with that release desired,
First doubts if truly she is free,
Then pauses, restlessly retired,
Alarm'd at too much liberty :
But soon, remembering all her debt
To plighted passion, gets by rote
Her duty ; says, " I love him ! " yet
The thought half chokes her in her throat ;
And, like that fatal " I am thine,"
Comes with alternate gush and check
And joltings of the heart, as wine
Pour'd from a flask of narrow neck.
Is he indeed her choice ? She fears
Her Yea was rashly said, and shame,
Remorse, and ineffectual tears
Revolt from his conceded claim.
Oh, treason ! So, with desperate nerve,
She cries, " I am in love, am his ! "

Lets run the cables of reserve,
And floats into a sea of bliss,
And laughs to think of her alarm,
Avows she was in love before,
Though his avowal was the charm
Which open'd to her own the door.
She loves him for his mastering air,
Whence, Parthian-like, she slaying flies;
His flattering look, which seems to wear
Her loveliness in manly eyes;
His smile, which, by reverse, portends
An awful wrath, should reason stir,
(How fortunate it is they're friends,
And he will ne'er be wroth with her!)
His power to do or guard from harm;
(If he but chose to use it half,
And catch her up in one strong arm,
What could she do but weep, or laugh!)
His talk, which still instructs, but so
That this applause seems still implied,

“How wise in all she ought to know!

“How ignorant of all beside!”

His skilful suit, which leaves her free,

Gives nothing for the world to name,

And keeps her conscience safe, while he,

With half the bliss, takes all the blame;

His clear repute with great and small;

The jealousy his choice will stir;

But, ten times more than ten times all,

She loves him for his love of her.

How happy 'tis that he can see

In her that total loveliness

Which she, for his sake, longs to be!

At times, she cannot but confess

Her other friends are somewhat blind:

Her parents' years excuse neglect;

But all the rest are scarcely kind;

And brothers grossly want respect.

And oft she views what he admires

Within her glass; and sight of this

Makes all the sum of her desires

To be devotion unto his.

But still, at first, whatever's done,

A touch, her arm press'd lightly, she
Stands dizzied, shock'd, and flush'd, like one

Set sudden neck-deep in the sea;

And, though her bond for endless time

To his good pleasure gives her o'er,

The slightest favour seems a crime,

Because it makes her love him more.

But that she'll never let him know;

For what were love should reverence
cease ?

A thought which makes her reason so

Inscrutable, it seems caprice.

With her, as with a desperate town,

Too weak to stand, too proud to treat,

The conqueror, though the walls are down,

Has still to capture street by street :

But, after that, habitual faith,

Divorced from self, where late 'twas due,
Walks nobly in its novel path,
And she's to changed allegiance true;
And, prizing what she can't prevent,
(Right wisdom, often misdeem'd whim,)
Her will's indomitably bent
On mere submission unto him;
To him she'll cleave, for him forsake
Father and mother's fond command:
He is her lord, for he can take
Hold of her faint heart with his hand.

II.

The Sentences.

1.

“**Y**OU speak,” cries Love, “where veils
are due!”

I answer, “Fear no harm from this:

“Women will vow I say not true,

“And men believe the lips they kiss.”

2.

At home the chaste maid’s fancy lies;

And thus may such a maid be known,

The beauty in her lover’s eyes

Is admiration of her own.

3.

“I’ll hunt for dangers North and South,

“To prove my love, which sloth maligns!”

What seems to say her rosy mouth ?

“I’m not convinced by proofs but signs !”

IDYL II.

AUNT MAUDE.

.1.

OH beating heart of sweet alarm,
Which stays the Lover's step, when
near

His Mistress, and her awful charm
Of grace and innocence sincere!
I held the open door, and heard
The voice of my betrothed Wife,
Who sang my verses, every word
By music taught its latent life;
With interludes of well-touch'd notes,
That flash'd, surprising and serene,

As meteor after meteor floats

The mid-November stars between.

There was a passion in her tone,

A tremor when she touch'd the keys,

Which told me she was there alone,

And uttering all her heart at ease.

I enter'd; for I did not choose

To kiss her hand, without the glove,

By chance or stealth: beyond their use,

Her large eyes flatter'd me with love.

2.

“I wish you had not come to-day!

“Would, Felix, we were safely wed!

“Aunt Maude is here. I cannot say

“The cruel things that she has said!”

“Aunt Maude, who used to box my ears?

“My old foe? she shall be my friend,

“Dearest, if you will dry your tears,

“Before this very evening's end.”

With true love's treacherous confidence,
And ire, at last to laughter won,
She told her words, and mark'd their sense,
By action, as her Aunt had done.

3.

- “ You, with your looks and handsome air,
“ To think of Vaughan! You fool!
You know,
“ You might, with ordinary care,
“ Ev'n yet, be Lady Harrico.
“ You're sure he'll do great things some day!
“ Nonsense, he wont; he's dress'd too well:
“ Dines with the Sterling Club, they say;
“ Not commonly respectable!
“ Half Puritan, half Cavalier!
“ His curly hair I think's a wig;
“ And, for his fortune, why, my Dear,
“ It's not enough to keep a gig.
“ Old Roger Vaughan will never die;

“ ‘And what you bring wont do for dress ;
 “ ‘And so you’ll live on “ Bye-and-bye,”
 “ ‘And oaten-cake and water-cress !’

4.

“ I wonder’d that she did not see
 “ How much she help’d you by dispraise,
 “ But only said you had bought for me
 “ A carriage and a pair of bays :
 “ She laugh’d : I cried, and left the room.
 “ Papa thinks, Felix, we might sell
 “ Those horses ; one would draw the
 brougham,—
 “ But here she comes : receive her well.”

5.

Her Aunt came in ; and, with a frown,
 “ Oh, you’re here, Mr. What’s-your-
 name.”
 “ Vaughan, Madam ;” and I took her down

To dinner; talk'd; opined the same,
Or made the difference smooth. We
thought

The Pritchard quarrel vilely patch'd.
She knew the Government was bought;
And call'd Thiers a knave unmatch'd.
I loathed the "Revolution Bill,"
No Pitts or Burkes had been since
then!

Ah, rising now was work up-hill;
Our's were hard times for gentlemen!
She sainted Philpotts; scorn'd the Whigs;
I almost wish'd the Bourbons back,
And spurn'd young Englanders for prigs:
Then she, with unexpected tack,
"My niece has told you every word
"I said of you! What may I mean?
"Of course she has: but you've not heard
"How I abused you to the Dean;—
"Yes, I'll take wine;—he's mad, like her;

“And she *will* have you: there it ends!

“And, now I’ve done my duty, Sir,

“And you’ve shown common-sense, we’re
friends!”

6.

“I love you best when you’re yourself;”

Said Honor, whom the Dean bade show
The place, upon an upper shelf,

Where Tasso stood, lent long ago.

I’d be whatever she loved best!

And sought forgiveness, not in vain.

“You’ve spoilt my rose!” and, from her
breast,

She gave my present back again.

“Oh, Sweet, how hard it is to part!

“You’re mine, and how unjust it seems.”

“Ah, yes, these ‘Good-nights’ break my
heart!

“You must go now, Love!” “Happy
dreams!”

“You’ll come to-morrow?” “Yes, Sweetest.”

“How

“Fragrant the air is! What a sky!

“Stop; where’s your Tasso? Leave it now!

“I’m coming, Aunt! — Good-bye!”

“Good-bye!”

III.

THE COUNTY BALL.

THE ACCOMPANIMENTS.

I.

Love and Honour.

WHAT man with baseness so content,
Or sick with wrong conceit of
right,

As not to know that the element

And inmost warmth of love's delight

Is honour? Who'd not rather kiss

A duchess than a milkmaid, prank

Them like in beauty both, which is

Precedent nature's obvious rank?

Hence, when I see the maid that's fair

With heavenly graces, chaste and good,

No lower honours, I declare,
Promote so passionate a mood.
Those lesser vaunts are dimm'd or lost
Which plume her name or paint her lip,
Extinct in the far brighter boast
Of her angelic fellowship.

II.

Love Ceremonious.

KEEP your undrest, familiar style
For strangers, but respect your friend,
Her most, whose matrimonial smile
Is and asks honour without end.
'Tis found, and needs it must so be,
That life from love's allegiance flags,
When love forgets his majesty
In sloth's unceremonious rags.
Love should make home a stately Court :
There let the world's rude, hasty ways
Be fashion'd to a loftier port,
And learn to bow and stand at gaze ;
And let the sweet, respective sphere
Of personal worship there obtain

Circumference for moving clear,
None treading on another's train.
This makes that pleasures do not cloy,
And dignifies our mortal strife
With calmness and considerate joy,
Befitting our immortal life.

III.

The Sentences.

1.

I WORSHIP'D Kate with all my will.

In idle moods you seem to see
A lofty spirit in a hill,
A human touch about a tree.

2.

Maid, choosing man, remember this:

You take his nature with his name:
Ask, too, what his religion is;
For you will soon be of the same.

3.

Who pleasure follows pleasure slays;

God's wrath upon himself he wreaks:

But all delights rejoice his days

Who takes with thanks, yet never seeks.

IDYL III.

THE COUNTY BALL.

1.

WELL, Heaven be thank'd my first-
love fail'd,

As, Heaven be thank'd, all first-loves do!

Thought I, when Fanny past me sail'd,

First-loved for what I never knew;

Unless for colouring in her talk,

When cheeks and merry mouth would
show

Three roses on a single stalk,

The middle wanting room to blow.

2.

But there danced she, who from the leaven
Of ill preserved my heart and wit
All unawares, for she was heaven,
Others at best but fit for it.
I mark'd her step, with peace elate,
Her brow more beautiful than morn,
Her sometime air of girlish state
Which sweetly waived its right to scorn;
The giddy crowd, she grave the while,
Although, as 'twere beyond her will,
About her mouth the baby smile
That she was born with linger'd still.
Her ball-dress seem'd a breathing mist,
From the fair form exhaled and shed,
Raised in the dance with arm and wrist
All warmth and light, unbraceleted.
Her motion, feeling 'twas beloved,
The pensive soul of tune express'd,
And, oh, what perfume, as she moved,

Came from the flowers in her breast!
Ah, none but I discern'd her looks,
When in the whirl she pass'd me by,
For love is like a ghost, and brooks
Only the chosen seer's eye;
And who but she could once divine
The halo and the happy trance,
When now her arm reposed on mine,
In all the pauses of the dance!
If either for all else but one
Was blinder than the mole that delves,
Dark-lanterns for all else, we shone
But to each other and ourselves.

3.

Whilst so her beauty fed my sight,
And whilst I lived in what she said,
Accordant airs, like all delight
Most sweet when noted least, were play'd;
And was it like the Pharisee

If I in secret bow'd my face
 With joyful thanks that I should be,
 Not as were many, but with grace,
 And fortune of well-nurtured youth,
 And days on sordid cares defile,
 And thoughts accustom'd to the truth,
 Made capable of her fair smile?

4.

About her neck, with heart full gay,
 I dropp'd her little eider cloak,
 And bade adieu, and rode away,
 Charles Huntly following. "Would I
 smoke?"
 "Yes" (to stop talk); but this my care,
 Was vain: he joked about the Ball,
 And laugh'd at all the people there:
 The Churchills chiefly stirr'd his gall:
 "My smart things, Vaughan you know,
 amuse

- “The girls; but they’re not like the rest;
“They make one mind one’s p’s and q’s,
“And smile at me, and not my jest.
“Give me your brisk and light-built Blondes!
“That tall one’s like as like can be
“To those slow Kriemhilds and Isondes
“You storm’d about at Trinity.
“You’ve changed! or perhaps you met too
young:
“*Mulier formosa*, Vaughan you know:
“And when one knows these charmers long
“By Jove we find the fins will show!”—
Did he not waltz with Fanny Fry?—
“Ah, there’s a trump, now; worth a pack
“Of sulky Kriemhilds. I’d give cry,
“But that they say you hunt that track.”
“They err! Good-night! Here lies my
course,
“Through Wilton.”—Silence blest mine
ears,

And, weak at heart with vague remorse,
A passing poignancy of tears
Attack'd mine eyes. By pale and park,
I rode, and ever seem'd to see,
In the transparent, starry dark,
That splendid brow of chastity,
That soft and yet subduing light,
At which, as at the sudden moon,
I held my breath, and thought "how
bright!"

That guileless beauty in its noon,
Compelling tribute of desires,
Ardent as day when Sirius reigns,
Pure as the permeating fires,
That smoulder in the opal's veins.

IV.

THE QUEEN'S ROOM.

5



THE ACCOMPANIMENTS.

I.

Accepted.

“**T**O marry her and take her home !”
The Poet, who his vision tells,
Describing greatness, speaks of Rome,
And each thing shows by something else :
But, through the list of Poets, look,
And who so happy to have found,
In universal nature’s book,
A likeness for a life so crown’d !
Here they speak best who best express
Their inability to speak,

And none are strong, but who confess

With happy skill that they are weak ;
For, in divinity and love

What's worth the saying can't be said,
And all who babble here approve
The wise, who're dumb on either head.

II.

Rejected.

“**P**ERHAPS she’s dancing somewhere
now!”

The thoughts of light and music wake
Sharp jealousies, that grow and grow
Till silence and the darkness ache.
He sees her step, so proud and gay,
Which, ere he spake, foretold despair;
Thus did she look, on such a day,
And such the fashion of her hair;
And thus she stood, when, stooping low,
He took the bramble from her dress,
And thus she laugh’d and talk’d, whose
“No”

Was sweeter than another’s “Yes.”

He feeds on thoughts that most deject ;
 He impudently feigns her charms,
So revered in his own respect,
 Clasp'd dreadfully by other arms ;
And turns, and puts his brows, that ache,
 Against the pillow where 'tis cold :
If only now his heart would break !
 But, oh, how much a heart can hold !

III.

The Sentences.

1.

WHAT may the desperate sinner win,
Whom stripes and precepts cannot
move?

Only the sadness of all sin

When look'd at in the light of love.

2.

You cannot see these robes of white

In which I sing of love? Alack,

Your darkness shows in heavenly light,

Though whiteness in the dark is black!

3.

Strong passions mean weak will; and he

Who truly knows the strength and bliss

Which are in love, will own with me

No passion, but a virtue 'tis.

IDYL IV.

THE QUEEN'S ROOM.

1.

THERE'S nothing sweeter than the days
In which young Love makes every
thought

Pure as a bride's blush, when she says
"I will" unto she knows not what;
And lovers, on the love-lit globe,
For love's sweet sake, walk yet aloof,
And hear Time weave the marriage-robe,
Attraction warp and reverence woof!

2.

My Housekeeper, my Nurse of yore,

Cried, as the latest carriage went,

“Well, Mr. Felix, Sir, I'm sure

“The morning's gone off excellent!

“I never saw the show to pass

“The ladies, in their fine fresh gowns,

“So sweetly dancing on the grass,

“To music with its ups and downs.

“We'd such work, Sir, to clean the plate:

“Twas just the busy times of old.

“The Queen's Room, Sir, look'd quite like
state.

“Miss Smythe, when she went up, made
bold

“To peep into the rose boudoir,

“And cried, ‘How charming! all quite
new;’

“And wonder'd whom it could be for.

“All but Miss Honor look'd in too.

- “ But she's too proud to peep and pry :
“ None's like that sweet Miss Honor, Sir !
“ Excuse my humbleness, but I
“ Pray Heav'n you'll get a wife like her !
“ All poor folks love Miss Honor's ways
“ Better than money. Mrs. Rouse,
“ Who ought to know a lady, says
“ No finer goes to Wilton House.
“ Miss Bagshaw thought that dreary room
“ Had kill'd old Mrs. Vaughan with
fright:
“ She would not sleep in such a tomb
“ For all her host was worth a night !
“ Miss Fry, Sir, laugh'd : they talk'd the rest
“ In French ; and French Sir's Greek
to me.
“ But, though they smiled, and seem'd to jest,
“ No love was lost, for I could see
“ How serious-like Miss Honor was ”—
“ Well, Nurse, this is not my affair.

“The ladies talk'd in French with cause!

“Good-day; and thank you for your
prayer.”

3.

I loiter'd through the vacant house,
Soon to be hers; in one room stay'd,
Of old my mother's: there my vows
Of endless thanks were oftenest paid.
This room its first condition kept;
For, on the road to Sarum Town,
There once an English Queen had slept,
Before the Hurst was half pull'd down.
The pictured walls the place became:
Across the Brook Anaurus, here,
Stout Jason bore the wrinkled dame
Whom service changed to Juno; there,
Ixion's false desire, instead
Of the nuptial goddess, clasp'd a cloud;
And, here, translated Psyche fed
Her gaze on Love, in heaven allow'd.

4.

And in this chamber had she been !

And into that she would not look !

My joy, my vanity, my Queen,

At whose dear name my pulses shook !

Ah, reader, might thy thoughts, like bees,

O'erswarm this plot of honey'd flowers,

Which I, with toil more sweet than ease,

Transplanted have from Nature's bowers,

And taste its various pleasures, all

Distill'd to one ecstatic line,

Thou might'st, if thou hast loved, recall

What peace and ardour then was mine.

V.

THE LOVE-LETTERS.



THE ACCOMPANIMENTS.

I.

The Paradox.

HOW strange a thing a Lover seems
To animals that do not love!
Look where he walks and talks in dreams,
And flouts us with his Lady's glove:
How foreign is the garb he wears;
And how his great devotion mocks
Our poor propriety, and scares
The undevout with paradox!

His soul, through scorn of worldly care,
And great extremes of sweet and gall,
And musing much on all that's fair,
Grows witty and fantastical:

He sobs his joy and sings his grief,
And evermore finds such delight
In simply picturing his relief,

That 'plaining seems to cure his plight:

He makes his sorrow, when there's none;

His fancy blows both cold and hot;

Next to the wish that she'll be won,

His first hope is that she may not;

He sues, yet deprecates consent;

Would she be captured she must fly;

She looks too happy and content,

For whose least pleasure he would die;

Oh, cruelty, she cannot care

For one to whom she's always kind!

He says he's naught, but oh, despair,

If he's not Jove to her fond mind!

He's jealous if she pets a dove,
She must be his with all her soul ;
Yet 'tis a postulate in love
That part is greater than the whole,
And all his apprehension's stress,
When he's with her, regards her hair,
Her hand, a ribbon of her dress,
As if his life were only there :
Because she's constant, he will change,
And kindest glances coldly meet,
And, all the time he seems so strange,
His soul is fawning at her feet :
Of smiles and simple heaven grown tired,
He wickedly provokes her tears,
And when she weeps, as he desired,
Falls slain with ecstasies of fears ;
He finds, although she has no fault,
Except the folly to be his ;
He worships her, the more to exalt
The profanation of a kiss ;

Health's his disease; he's never well

But when his paleness shames her rose;

His faith's a rock-built citadel,

Its sign a flag that each way blows;

His o'erfed fancy frets and fumes;

And Love, in him, is fierce like Hate,

And ruffles his ambrosial plumes

Against the bars of time and fate.

II.

The Sentences.

1.

TO many riddles here's the clue:
For fellowship and self-respect,
Love, who will kiss and worship too,
Must have both mystery and defect.

2.

The grateful love the Giver's law;
But who the Giver not admire,
From sin or doubtful sanction draw
The biting sauce their feasts require.

3.

Samson the mighty, Solomon

The wise, and holy David, all

Must doff their caps to Love, for none

But fell as Love would scorn to fall.

IDYL V.

THE LOVE-LETTERS.

I.

YOU ask, Will admiration halt,
Should time divulge some hidden
mote?

Oh, how I wish I knew that fault,
That I, who do but love, might dote!

You that have stoop'd to my estate

Will I so constantly admire,

Yourself yourself shall emulate,

And be yourself your own desire.

I'll nobly mirror you too fair,

And, when you're false to me your glass,

What's wanting you'll by that repair,
So bring yourself through me to pass.
O Dearest, tell me how to prove
Good-will which cannot be express'd :
The beneficial heart of love
Is labour in an idle breast.
Name in the world your chosen part,
And here I vow, with all the bent
And application of my heart
To give myself to your content.
Would you live on, home-worship'd, thus,
Not proudly high nor poorly low ?
Indeed the lines are fall'n to us
In pleasant places ! Be it so.
But would you others heav'nward move,
By sight not faith, while you they admire ?
I'll help with zeal, as I approve,
That just and merciful desire.
High as the lonely moon to view
I'll lift your light: do you decree

Your place, I'll win it: for from you

Command inspires capacity.

Or, unseen, would you sway the world

More surely? Then in loftiest rhyme

I'll raise your emblem, fair unfurl'd

With blessing in the breeze of time.

Faith removes mountains, much more love:

Let your contempt abolish me

If aught of your devisor prove

Too hard or high to do or be.

II.

I found your letter, Love. How kind
To leave it there! I cannot tell
How happy I am, or how you find
Words to express your thoughts so well.
The Girls to-night attend the Ball
At Wilton. If you can, Dear, come:
Or any day this week you call
You'll find Papa and me at home.
You said to Mary once—I hope
You meant it—women *should* be vain:
On Saturday your friend, (her Pope,)
The Bishop dined with us again.
She put the question, if they ought?
He turn'd it cleverly away,
(For giddy Mildred cried, she thought
We *must*,) with “What we must we may.”

Dear Papa laugh'd, and said 'twas sad
To think how vain his girls would be,
Above all Mary, now she had
Episcopal authority.
But I was very dull, dear Friend,
And went upstairs at last and cried.
Be sure to come to-day, or send
A rose-leaf kiss'd on either side.
Adieu! I am not well. Last night
I had startling dreams: I often woke,
The summer-lightning was so bright;
And when it flash'd I thought you spoke.

III.

What lifts you in my thoughts so far
Beyond all else? Let Love be true!
'Tis that which all right women are,
But which I'll know in none but you.
You are to me the only Ark
Of that high mystery which locks
The lips of joy, or speaks in dark
Enigmas and in paradox,
That potent charm, which none can fly,
Nor would, which makes me bond and
free,
Nor can I tell if first 'twas I
Chose it, or it elected me;
Which, when I look intentest, lo,
Cheats most mine eyes, albeit my heart,

Content to feel and not to know,
Perceives it all in every part ;
I kiss its cheek, its life divine
Exhales from its resplendent shroud ;
Ixion's fate reversed is mine,
Authentic Juno seems a cloud ;
I feel a happy warmth, I see
A bright circumference of rays,
But darkness where the sun should be
Fills adoration with amaze ;
And when, for joy's relief, I think
To fathom with the line of thought
The well from which I, blissful, drink,
The spring's so deep, I come to nought.



VI.

THE REVULSION.

THE ACCOMPANIMENTS.

I.

The Pearl.

SAY, Muse, who warblest at mine ear
That Prothalamium jubilant
Which I, in weakness and in fear,
Repeat, and of its glory scant,
Say, what of those who are not wives,
Nor have them; tell what fate they prove
Who keep the pearl which happier lives
Cast in the costly cup of Love?
I answer, (for the sacred Muse
Is dumb,) "Ill chance is not for aye;

“But who with erring preference choose

“The sad and solitary way,

“And think peculiar praise to get

“In heaven, where error is not known,

“They have the separate coronet

“They sought, but miss a worthier crown.

“Virgins are they, before the Lord,

“Whose hearts are pure: the vestal fire

“Is not, as some misread the Word,

“By marriage quench'd, but burns the
higher.”

II.

Rachel.

YOU loved her, and would lie all night
Thinking how beautiful she was,
And what to do for her delight.

Now both are bound with alien laws!

Be patient; put your heart to school;

Weep if you will, but not despair:

The trust that nought goes wrong by rule

Makes light a load the many bear.

Love, if heav'n's heav'n, shall meet his
dues,

Though here unmatch'd, or match'd
amiss;

Meanwhile, the gentle cannot choose

But learn to love the lips they kiss.

Ne'er hurt the homely sister's ears
 With Rachel's beauties: secret be
The lofty mind whose lonely tears
 Protest against mortality.

III.

The Sentences.

1.

SAY Grace: it is not time mispent:
Worst food this betters, and the best,
Wanting this natural condiment,
Breeds crudeness, and will not digest.

2.

God loves no heart to others iced,
Nor erring flatteries, which bedim
Our glorious membership of Christ,
Wherein all loving His love Him.

3.

All blessings ask a blessed mood :

The sauce is here much more than meat :

Happy who chooses gratitude !

That wanting, God will try regret.

IDYL VI.

THE REVULSION.

1.

TWAS when the spousal time of May
Hangs all the hedge with bridal
wreaths,

And air's so sweet the bosom gay

Gives thanks for every breath it breathes,
When like to like is gladly moved,

And each thing joins in Spring's refrain,
"Let those love now, who never loved;
"Let those who have loved love again;"

That I, in whom the sweet time wrought,
Lay stretch'd within a lonely glade,
Abandon'd to delicious thought
Beneath the softly twinkling shade.
The leaves, all stirring, mimick'd well
A neighbouring rush of rivers cold,
And, as the sun or shadow fell,
So these were green and those were
gold;
In masses dim, blue hyacinths droop'd,
And breadths of primrose cool'd the air,
Which, wandering through the woodland,
stoop'd
And gather'd perfumes here and there;
Upon the spray the squirrel swung,
And careless songsters, six or seven,
Sang lofty songs the leaves among,
Fit for their only listener, Heaven.
I sigh'd, "Immeasurable bliss
"Gains nothing by becoming more!"

“Millions have meaning; after this
“Cyphers forget the integer.”

2.

And so I mused, till musing brought
A dream that shook my house of clay,
And, in my humbled heart, I thought:
To me there yet may come a day
When o'er my head great waters roll,
And this poor hope is all I have
That faith, though helpless to console,
May still be strong enough to save;
And this the single vestige seen
Of comfort, earthly or divine,
The thing I suffer must have been
Her portion, had it not been mine.
Then I, who knew, from watching life,
That blows prepared for seldom fall,
Rehearsed the losing of a wife,
And faced its terrors each and all.

The self-chastising fancy show'd
The coffin with its ghastly breath;
The innocent sweet face that owed
None of its innocence to death;
The lips that used to talk; the knell
That bade the world beware of mirth;
The heartless and intolerable
Indignity of "earth to earth;"
Love's still recurrent jubilees,
Each dropping on my life like lead;
At morn remembering by degrees
That she I dream'd about was dead;
The duties of my life the same,
Their meaning for the feelings gone;
Friendship impertinent, and fame
Disgusting; and, more harrowing none,
Small household troubles fall'n to me,
As, "What time would I dine to day?"
And, oh, how could I bear to see
Her noisy children at their play.

Besides, where all things limp and halt,
It could not chance that I alone
Should keep my love without default
Pitch'd at the true and heavenly tone:
Some festal-day might come to mind
That miss'd the gift which more endears;
Some hour which might have been more kind,
And now less fertile in vain tears;
Some little wrong, now greatly rued;
Remorse of misesteem'd delight,
And love, in disbelieving mood,
Deserting his celestial height;
The thought that God in grace sent grief
To make me less the world's, and more
Meek-hearted: ah, what sick relief!
Why bow'd I not my heart before?

3.

“O, Heav'n,” I cried, with chill alarm,
“If this fantastic horror shows

“The feature of an actual harm!”

And, coming straight to Sarum Close,
As one that dreams his wife is dead,
And cannot in his slumber weep,
And moans upon his wretched bed,
And wakes, and finds her there asleep,
And laughs and sighs, so I, not less
Relieved, beheld, with blissful start,
The light and happy loveliness
Which lay so heavy on my heart.

VII.

TÊTE-À-TÊTE.

THE ACCOMPANIMENTS.

I.

The Mistress.

IF he's capricious she'll be so,
But, if his duties constant are,
She lets her loving favour glow
As steady as a tropic star.
Appears there nought for which to weep,
She'll weep for nought, for his dear
sake;
She clasps her sister in her sleep;
Her love in dreams is most awake.

Her soul, that once with pleasure shook,
Did any eyes her beauty own,
Now wonders how they dare to look
On what belongs to him alone;
The indignity of taking gifts
Exhilarates her loving breast;
A rapture of submission lifts
Her life into celestial rest;
There's nothing left of what she was;
Back to the babe the woman dies;
And all the wisdom that she has
Is to love him for being wise.
She's confident because she fears;
And, though discreet when he's away,
If none but her dear despot hears,
She'll prattle like a child at play.
Perchance, when all her praise is said,
He tells the news, a battle won,
On either side ten thousand dead,
Describing how the whole was done:

She thinks, "He's looking on my face!

"I am his joy; whate'er I do,

"He sees such time-contenting grace

"In that, he'd have me always so!"

And, evermore, for either's sake,

To the sweet folly of the dove,

She joins the cunning of the snake,

To rivet and exalt his love;

Her mode of candour is deceit;

And what she thinks from what she'll say,

Although I'll never call her cheat,

Lies far as Scotland from Cathay.

Without his knowledge he was won;

Against his nature kept devout;

She'll never tell him how 'twas done,

And he will never find it out.

If, sudden, he suspects her wiles,

And hears her forging chain and trap,

And looks, she sits in simple smiles,

Her two hands lying in her lap.

Her secret, (privilege of the Bard,
Whose fancy is of either sex,)
Is mine; but let the darkness guard
Mysteries that light would more perplex.

II.

The Sentences.

1.

“**I** SAW him kiss your cheek!” “’Tis true.”

“O, modesty!” “’Twas strictly kept:

“He thought me asleep; at least, I knew

“He thought I thought he thought I slept.”

2.

Oh, where shall art, man’s nature, halt;

And who shall say how far above

Its present bliss may Time exalt

Civility’s sweet nursling, Love!

3.

That nothing here may want its praise,
Know, she who by her dress reveals
A fine and modest taste, displays
More loveliness than she conceals.

IDYL VII.

TÊTE-À-TÊTE.

1.

PRAY, dear Papa, let me go too,
“If Honor and Felix do not mind!”
“What, does not Felix talk to you?”
“Oh, yes, Papa; he’s very kind;
“He knows not which he should prefer;
“He sits by Honor, and talks to me,
“And vexes so both me and her
“With this impartiality:

“Poor Honor says—” “O, Mildred, what?”

“Well, come with me,” replied the Dean.
Honor fetch’d his stick and hat,
And went again to work her screen.

2.

“What’s this?” “Miss Gussett’s Fashion-
Book.

“Do you like flounc’d or plain skirts
best?”

“O, flounc’d, like your’s. These—” “gather-
ers” “look

“Too straight: I like them thus, recess’d.”

“That fashion’s old.” “You’ve charming
taste

“In colours: dim grey with a dash

“Of gayest azure at the waist!

“How I should like to have that sash!

“Oh, thanks! What narrow boundaries hold

“My world! You are so fair—but, Dear,

“ You must be tired of being told ? ”

“ Oh, no, Love ! ” “ Are you pleased to hear ? ”

“ I would, of course, seem fair to you. ”

“ But, Sweetest, you must promise me
To think my praises simply true ! ”

“ Come to the mirror. Why not ? See,
“ Are you not beautiful ? Confess ! ”

“ Nay, till you do, you must not go ! ”

“ There, while you're blushing, tell me ! ”

“ Yes. ”

“ You can't see with your head turn'd so. ”

3.

I praised her, but no praise could fill

The depths of her desire to please,

Though dull to others as a Will

To them that have no legacies.

The more I praised the more she shone ;

Her eyes incredulously bright,

And all her beauty fully blown

Beneath the beams of my delight.

Sweet rivalry was thus begot :

By turns, my speech, in passion's style,

With flatteries the truth o'ershot,

And she surpass'd them with her smile.

4.

“ You have my heart so sweetly seized,

“ And I confess, nay, 'tis my pride

“ That I'm with you so solely pleased,

“ That, if I'm pleased with aught beside,

“ As music, or the month of June,

“ My friend's devotion, or his wit,

“ A rose, a rainbow, or the moon,

“ It is that you illustrate it.

“ All these are parts where you're the whole !

“ You fit the taste for Paradise,

“ To which your charms draw up the soul

“ As turning spirals draw the eyes.

“Nature to you was more than kind!

“Twas fond perversity to dress

“So simple and so meek a mind

“In such a pomp of loveliness

“But, praising you, the fancy deft

“Flies wide and lets the quarry stray,

“And when all’s said, there’s something
left,

“And that’s the thing I meant to say.”

5.

“Dear Felix!” “Dearest Honor!”—There
Was Aunt Maude’s noisy knock and
ring.—

“Stop, Felix; you have caught my hair.

“Thanks. Is it smooth? Now will you
bring

“My screen? Good-morning, Aunt!”

“Why, Puss,

“You look magnificent to-day.”

“Here’s Felix, Aunt.” “Fox and green
goose !

“Who handsome gets should handsome
pay.”

“You’re friends, dear Aunt !” “O, to be
sure !

“Good morning ! Go on flattering, Sir ;

“A woman’s like the Koh-i-noor,

“Worth just the price that’s put on her.”

VIII.

THE FRIENDS.

THE ACCOMPANIMENTS.

I.

Beauty.

BY Heaven's law, the Jew might take
A slave to wife, if she was fair;
So strong a plea does beauty make
That, where 'tis seen, discretion there
Inhabits also. If we learn
That this illustrious vaunt's a lie,
The soul which can indeed discern
Sees ugly contrariety,
And laughs at Nature's wanton mood,
Which, thus the swinish thing to flout,
Though haply in its gross way good,
Hangs such a jewel in its snout.

II.

Wisdom.

WOULD Wisdom for herself be woo'd,
And wake the foolish from his
dream,

She must be glad as well as good,

And must not only be but seem :

Beauty and joy are hers by right ;

And, knowing this, I wonder less

That she's so scorn'd, when falsely dight

In misery and ugliness.

What's that which Heav'n to man endears,

And that which eyes no sooner see

Than the heart says, with floods of tears,

“ Ah, that's the thing which I would be ! ”

Not childhood, full of frown and fret;
 Not youth, impatient to disown
Those visions high, which to forget
 Were worse than never to have known;
Not worldlings, in whose fair outside
 Nor courtesy nor justice fails,
Whose virtues are but vices tied,
 Like Samson's foxes, by the tails;
Not poets: real things are dreams,
 When dreams are as realities,
And boasters of celestial gleams
 Go stumbling aye for want of eyes;
Not patriots or people's men,
 In whom two worse-match'd evils meet
Than ever sought Adullam's den,
 Base conscience and a high conceit;
Not new-made saints, their feelings iced,
 Their joy in man and nature gone,
Who sing, "O, easy yoke of Christ!"
 But find 'tis hard to get it on;

Not great men, even when they're good:
The good man whom the Lord makes
great,
By some disgrace of chance or blood
He fails not to humiliate:
Not these: but souls, found here and there,
Oases in our waste of sin,
Where every thing is well and fair,
And God remits his discipline;
Whose sweet subdual of the world
The worldling scarce can recognize,
And ridicule, against it hurl'd,
Drops with a broken sting and dies;
Who nobly, if they cannot know
Whether a 'scutcheon's dubious field
Carries a falcon or a crow,
Fancy a falcon on the shield;
Yet ever careful not to hurt
God's honour, who creates success,
Their praise of even the best desert

Is but to have presumed no less ;
And, should their own life plaudits bring,
They're simply vex'd at heart that such
An easy, yea, delightful thing
Should move the minds of men so much.
They live by law, not like the fool,
But like the Bard, who freely sings
In strictest bonds of rhyme and rule,
And finds in them not bonds but wings.
They shine like Moses in the face,
And teach our hearts, without the rod,
That God's grace is the only grace,
And all grace is the grace of God.
Their home is home; their chosen lot
A private place and private name,
But, if the world's want calls, they'll not
Refuse the indignities of fame.

III.

Joy.

SWEET Order hath its draught of bliss
 Graced with the pearl of God's consent,
 Ten times ecstatic in that 'tis
 Considerate and innocent.

In vain Disorder grasps the cup:

The pleasure's not enjoy'd, but spilt,
 And, if he stoops to lick it up,

It only tastes of earth and guilt:

His sorry raptures rest destroys;

To live, like comets, they must roam:

On settled poles turn solid joys,

And sunlike pleasures shine at home.

IV.

The Sentences.

1.

GIVE thanks for nought, if you've no
more :

And, having all things, do not doubt
That nought, with thanks, is blest before
Whate'er the world can give, without.

2.

Wouldst me with benefactions move,
Unmoved thyself? Friend, let me lack !
I'll pauper it for nought but love,
And even that I'll pay thee back.

3.

You love? That's high as you shall go;

For 'tis as true as Gospel text

Not noble then is never so,

Either in this world or the next.

IDYL VIII.

THE FRIENDS.

1.

FRANK'S long, dull letter, lying by
The gay blue sash from Honor's waist,
Reproach'd me; passion spared a sigh
For friendship without cause disgraced.
How should I greet him? how pretend
The warmth that once his worth inspired?
Time was when either, in his friend,
His own deserts with joy admired;
We took one side in school-debate,
Like hopes pursued with equal thirst,

Were even-bracketed by Fate,
Twin-Wranglers, seventh from the First;
And either loved a lady's laugh
More than all music: he and I
Were perfect in the pleasant half
Of universal charity.

2.

From pride of likeness thus I loved
Him and he me, till love begot
The lowliness which now approved
Nothing but that which I was not.
Blest was the pride of feeling so
Subjected to a girl's soft reign!
She was my vanity, and, oh,
All other vanities how vain!

3.

Frank follow'd in his letter's track,
And set my guilty heart at ease

By paying my excuses back

With just the same apologies.

So he'd neglected me as well!

Good fortune also paved the way
For what I sought excuse to tell.

He dined at Wilton yesterday,
And met HONORIA Churchill there:

A lovelier girl he'd seldom seen!

"You said the Wiltshire girls were fair,

"But never mention'd her, the queen."

How sweet to hear him praise her charms!

For love, like faith, though ne'er so sure,
With slightest confirmation warms,

And feels its great assurance more.

"Have you not heard then? She and I,

"Grant Heav'n we both may live so long,

"Are to be married next July.

"Is she not lovely! I did wrong

"Not to inform you, but—" Then he

Show'd me a portrait, and turn'd red.

“Charming!” I cried. “Of course you’ll be
“My Groom’s-man, Vaughan? In June
we wed.”

4.

Each, rapturous, praised his lady’s worth,
Frank eloquently thus: “Her face
“Is the summ’d sweetness of the earth,
“Her soul the glass of heaven’s grace,
“To which she leads me by the hand;
“Or, briefly all the truth to say
“To you, who briefly understand,
“She is both heaven and the way.
“She charms with manners pure and high,
“The fruit of an ancestral tree,
“And a devout life, order’d by
“The rubric of civility;
“Displeasures and resentments pass
“Athwart her charitable eyes
“More fleetingly than breath from glass,
“Or truth from bad men’s memories;

“ Her heart’s so touch’d with other’s woes
“ She has no need of chastisement;
“ Her lovely life’s conditions close,
“ Like God’s commandments, with con-
tent,
“ And make an aspect calm and gay,
“ Where sweet affections come and go,
“ Till all who see her, smile, and say,
“ How fair and happy that she’s so!”—
“ You paint Miss Churchill! Pray go
on”—
“ She’s perfect, and if joy was much
“ To think her Nature’s paragon,
“ ’Tis more that there’s another such!”

5.

Praising and paying back the praise
Of our sweet girls, t’ward Sarum Spire
We walk’d in evening’s golden haze,
Friendship from passion stealing fire.

In joy's crown danced the feather jest,
And, parting by the Deanery door,
Clasp'd hands, less shy than words, confess'd
We had not been true friends before.

IX.

THE REGATTA.

THE ACCOMPANIMENTS.

I.

“Platonic Love.”

RIGHT art thou who wouldst rather be
A doorkeeper in Love's fair house,
Than lead the wretched revelry
Where fools at swinish troughs carouse.
But do not boast of being least;
And if to kiss thy Mistress' skirt
Amaze thy brain, scorn not the Priest
Whom greater honours do not hurt.
Stand off and gaze, if more than this
Be more than thou canst understand,

Revering him whose power of bliss,
 Angelic, dares to seize her hand,
Or whose seraphic love makes flight
 To the apprehension of her lips;
And think, the sun of such delight
 From thine own shadow takes eclipse:
And, wouldst thou to the same aspire,
 This is the art thou must employ,
Live purely; so shalt thou acquire
 Unknown capacities of joy.

II.

Night Thoughts.

'TIS sweeter than all else below,
The daylight and its duties done,
To fold the arms for rest, and so
Relinquish all regards but one;
To see her features in the dark;
To lie and meditate, once more,
Some grace he did not fully mark,
Some tone he had not heard before;
Then from beneath his head to take
Her notes, her picture, and her glove,
Put there for joy when he shall wake,
And press them to the heart of love;
And then to whisper "Wife," and pray
To live so long as not to miss

That unimaginable day

Which farther seems the nearer 'tis;

And still from joy's unfathom'd well

To drink, in sleep, while, on her brow
Of innocence ineffable,

The laughing bridal roses blow.

III.

The Sentences.

1.

FULL oft the Bard must curb his wit
With, "That's a note beyond my
voice;

"And, if I strove to utter it,

"'Twould not be melody but noise!"

2.

Ice-cold strikes heaven's noble glow
To spirits whose vital heat is hell;
And to corrupt hearts even so
The songs I sing, the tale I tell.

3.

Well-order'd and right-judging minds!

 If love is virtue's only mood,
And love's delightful, logic finds
 What's not delightful is not good.

IDYL IX.

THE REGATTA.

1.

WHAT should I do? In such a wife
Fortune had lavish'd all her store,
And nothing now seem'd left for life
But to deserve her more and more.
To this I vow'd my life's whole scope;
And Love said, "I forewarn you now,
"The maiden will fulfil your hope
"Only as you fulfil your vow."

2.

The boon she had ask'd, (a task for days,)
Was done this morning while she slept,
With that full heart which thinks no
praise

Of vows which are not more than kept:
But loftier work did love impose,
And studious hours. Alas, for these,
While she from all my thoughts arose
Like Venus from the restless seas!

3.

I conn'd a scheme, with mind elate:
My Uncle's land, which fell to me,
My skill at College in debate,
Made fair my chance for Salisbury:
This vantage-ground once touch'd upon
Thro' saps first labour'd out of sight,
Far loftier peaks were lightly won
By chamois-leaps from height to height;

And that great honour partly paid,
Or recognized, at least, in life,
Which this most sweet and noble Maid
Should yield to him who call'd her Wife.

4.

An end, then, to the shameful sloth
Which turn'd her favour to reproof!
This very hour my happy oath
Should work reform: I'd keep aloof
From love's delight; to Sarum Close
I'd give two evenings every week;
(The first, this evening;) save on those,
I nought would do, think, read, or speak,
Which did not help my settled will
To earn my country's just applause.
And now, forthwith, to mend my skill
In ethics, politics, and laws,
The Statesman's learning! Flush'd with
power

And pride of freshly-formed resolve,
I read Helvetius half-an-hour ;
But, halting in attempts to solve
Why, more than all things else that be,
A maiden's grace hath force to move
That sensitive appetency
Of intellectual good, call'd love,
Took Blackstone down, who served to draw
My swift-deriving thoughts ere long
To love, which is the source of law,
And, like a king, can do no wrong.
I open'd Hyde, where loyal hearts,
With faith unpropp'd by precedent,
Began to play rebellious parts :
O, mighty stir that little meant !
How dull the crude plough'd-fields of fact
To me who trod the Elysian grove !
How idle all heroic act
To the least suffering of love !
I could not read : so took my pen,

And thus commenced, from former notes,
A Lecture for the Salisbury men,

With due regard to Tory votes :

“A road’s a road, though worn to ruts :

“They speed who travel straight therein ;

“But he who tacks and tries short cuts

“Gets praise of fools, and breaks his
shin”—

And here I stopp’d in sheer despair :

But, what to-day was thus begun,

I vow’d, back-lounging in my chair,

To-morrow should indeed be done ;

Then loosed my chafing thoughts from school,

To play with fancy as they chose,

And then, to carry out my rule,

I dress’d, and went to Sarum Close.

5.

Ah, how she laugh’d ! Diviner sense

Did Nature, forming her, inspire

To omit the grosser elements

And make her all of air and fire!

To-morrow, Cowes' Regatta fell:

The Dean would let his daughters go,
If I went too. "With joy." Ah, well,

After July 'twould not be so!

After July? Oh, age to wait!

Look where she walk'd! The Dean
should hear

My plans: he would, perhaps, abate

A month of this eternal year!

"There's much" said he "in what you say:

"Such schemes it's quite right to defer

"Till—" "Do, Sir, let it be in May!"

"Well, go and talk of it with her."

X.

THE EVE OF THE WEDDING.

THE ACCOMPANIMENTS.

I.

The Meditation.

1.

SHE sits upon her little bed,
And muses by the musing moon:
Ere this to-morrow she'll be wed!
Ere this? Ere this? How strangely soon!
An obvious blank of ignorance
Lies full across her forward way,
And shadows, cast from unknown chance,
Make strange and dim the coming day.
She must not muse too much! Vague fear
O'erfilms her apprehensive eye;

And she may swoon, with no one near,
And haply so, unmarried, die.
Her faithless dread she now discards;
And now remorseful memory flings
Its glory round the last regards
Of home and old accustom'd things.

2.

Her father's voice, her mother's eyes
Accuse her treason: all in vain
She thinks herself a wife, and tries
To comprehend the greater gain:
Her unknown fortune nothing cheers
Her loving heart's familiar loss,
And torrents of repentant tears
Their hot and smarting threshold cross.
When first within her bosom Love
Took birth, and beat his blissful wings,
It seem'd to lift her mind above
All care for other earthly things;

But, oh, too lightly did she vow
To leave for aye her happy nest;
And dreadful is the thought that now
Assaults her weak and shaken breast:
Ah, should her lover's love abate;
And should she, miserable, lose
All dear regards of maiden state,
Dissolved by time and marriage dues.
Once more those sickening dreams alloy
Her golden hope with nameless blame:
But dread, she trusts, will turn to joy,
Like sombre smoke to sudden flame.
With instinct of her ignorance,
The simple virgin's veiled guide,
She casts to Love the reins of chance,
Nor recks what henceforth shall betide;
And, so determined, she collects
Her scatter'd senses, much abused
By fear, that monstrously reflects
God's order'd future all confused.

And now to rest! At day's first gleam
They'll come to wake her to her pride,
And weary looks would ill beseem
Her Lover's decorated Bride.

II.

The Sentences.

1.

WHERE human motives are enough,
Divine, there misdirected, fail,
And they but rock on waters rough
Whose winds of grace want nature's sail.

2.

Kind souls, you wonder why, love you,
When you, you wonder why, love none:
We love, Sir, for the good we do,
Not that which unto us is done!

3.

Inevitably hapless plight

Of mortals! Hapless is the man

Who cannot act his rule of right,

And still more hapless he who can.

IDYL IX.

THE EVE OF THE WEDDING.

1.

SHE murmur'd, as I rose to go,
"Oh, Felix, do you love me?"
"Sweet,
"Why do you ask?" "I scarcely know."
"Adieu, then, till at church we meet."

2.

And was it no vain fantasy
That lifted me from earth with pride?
Should I to-morrow verily
Be Bridegroom, and Honoria Bride?

Was I, in simple truth, henceforth
 To live the sole and supreme lord
Of her whose smile for loftiest worth
 Were all too bountiful reward ?
To live with her I worship'd, chain'd
 By chains not dissolubly wrought ?
Oh, bliss past all belief, it pain'd
 And strain'd the narrow house of thought.
Patience and hope had parted truce,
 And all my thoughts and feelings were
Like blinding mists driven up profuse
 Before the Day's resplendent car.
Incredible life's promise seem'd,
 Or, credible, for life too great :
Love his own deity blasphemed,
 And doff'd at last his heavenly state.
What force, if man were placed so high,
 To further insolence set bars,
And kept the chaste moon in the sky
 And bade him not tread out the stars !

3.

Vague discontents awaken'd, fed

By wealth exceeding hope or aim,
And fears, like Salamanders, bred

In love's so long unfaltering flame.

Ah, what if time should make us twain,

Or course of custom let us run,

With undistinguish'd heart and brain,

Like neighbouring dew-drops into one?

Or what if love were blind? Then she,

This maid, who now appear'd most
rare,

When time had taught my heart to
see,

Might prove less worshipfully fair:

If not, then I, found little worth,

Might drop ridiculously down

From love's heroic height to earth,

And cast my sceptre and my crown.

4.

In the still dark the stable-clock
 Struck, only twice, and, far away,
With answering cheer the crying cock
 Rebuked the long, long lingering day.

5.

What, should I thus neglect my pledge
 To keep love's stately honour bright,
And, knowing haste is sacrilege
 In heaven, at last deny the right!
I told myself how Jacob paid
 The patient price of Rachel, then
What reverent grace Tobias said
 To Sarah's innocent "Amen:"
'Twas all in vain: true will was storm'd
 By lawless hope and lawless fear,
And fire-mists of a world unform'd
 Hid from my soul the azure clear.

6.

But Heav'n, who often grants us nought,
Till, weary, we have ceased to ask,
Absolved me now from restless thought,
And put aside the cloudy mask :
The self-forgetting heart of love,
That seeks to give, not gain delight,
Like morning bade the mists remove,
And so once more I breathed aright ;
And I rehearsed my marriage vow,
And swore her welfare to prefer
To all things, and for aye as now
To live, not for myself, but her.
Forth, from the glittering spirit's peace
And gayety ineffable,
Stream'd to the heart delight and ease,
As from an overflowing well ;
And, orderly deriving thence
Its pleasure perfect and allow'd,

Bright as the spirit shone the sense,
As with the sun a fleecy cloud.
If now to part with her could make
Her pleasure greater, sorrow less,
I for my epitaph would take
"To serve seem'd more than to possess."
I well perceiv'd, in vision sweet
Which dazzled with bright dew mine
eyes,
That love and joy draw vital heat
From altar fires of sacrifice.

7.

The daylight up the sky now crept,
And birds were garrulous in the grove,
And on my marriage-morn, I slept
A soft sleep, undisturb'd by love.

XI.

THE DEPARTURE.

THE ACCOMPANIMENTS.

I.

Womanhood.

BE man's hard virtues highly wrought,
But let my gentle Mistress be,
In every look, word, deed, and thought,
Nothing but sweet and womanly!
Her virtues please my virtuous mood,
But what at all times I admire
Is, not that she is wise or good,
But just the thing which I desire.
With versatility to bring
Her mental tone to any strain,
If oft'nest she is anything,
Be it thoughtless, talkative, and vain.

That seems in her supremest grace
Which, virtue or not, apprises me
That my familiar arms embrace
Unfathomable mystery.

II.

The Symbol.

AS if I chafed the sparks from glass
And said, "It lightens," hitherto
The songs I've made of love may pass
For all but for proportion true ;
But likeness and proportion both
Hence fail, as if a child in glee,
Catching the flakes of the salt froth,
Cried, "Look, my mother, here's the
sea."

Yet by the help of what's so weak,
But not diverse, to those who know,
And only unto those I speak,
May far-inferring fancy show

Love's living sea by coasts uncurb'd,
It's depth, it's mystery, and it's might,
It's indignation if disturb'd,
The glittering peace of it's delight.

III.

The Sentences.

1.

RESPECTS with threefold grace endue
The right to be familiar; none
Whose ways forget that they are two
Perceive the bliss of being one.

2.

I vow'd unvarying faith; and she
To whom in full I pay that vow,
Rewards me with variety
Which men who change can never know.

3.

“The man seeks first to please his wife,”

Declares but not complains St. Paul:
And other loves have little life,

When she's not loved the most of all.

IDYL XI.

THE DEPARTURE.

1.

LIFE smitten with a feverish chill,
The brain too tired to understand,
In apathy of heart and will,
I took the woman from the hand
Of him who stood for God, and heard
Of Christ, and of the Church his Bride;
The Feast, by presence of the Lord
And his first Wonder, beautified;
The mystic sense to Christian men;
The bonds in innocency made,

And gravely to be enter'd then
 For children, godliness, and aid,
 And honour'd, and kept free from smirch;
 And how a man must love his wife
 No less than Christ did love his Church,
 If need be, giving her his life:
 And, vowing then the mutual vow,
 The tongue spake, but intention slept:
 Ah, well for us Heav'n asks not how
 Such oaths are sworn, but how they're
 kept!

2.

"While Honor's changing" (said the Dean)
 "Her bridal for her travelling dress,
 "I'll preach allegiance to your Queen.
 "Preaching's the trade which I profess;
 "And one more minute's mine! You know
 "I've paid my girl a father's debt,
 "And this last charge is all I owe.
 "She's your's: but I love more than yet

- “ You can : such fondness only wakes
 “ When time has rais’d the heart above
“ The prejudice of youth, which makes
 “ Beauty conditional to love.
“ Prepare to meet the weak alarms
 “ Of novel nearness : recollect
“ The eye which magnifies her charms
 “ Is microscopic to defect.
“ You smile ! You’ll find out much to mend,
 “ Though never girl, I think, had less !—
“ Watch, by the way, or else she’ll spend
 “ Too much in alms-deeds and on dress.—
“ Her wealth is your esteem ; beware
 “ Of finding fault ; her will’s unnerv’d
“ By blame ; from you ’twould be despair ;
 “ But praise that’s only half deserv’d
“ Will all her noble nature stir
 “ To make your utmost wishes true.
“ Yet think, while thus amending her,
 “ Of matching her ideal too !

“Of perfect nuptial joy the price
“Is manhood perfectly fulfill’d.
“Spoilt with a palate feebly nice,
“Or with a palsied holding spill’d,
“The sweetest cup is lost on Sloth.
“To keep your mistress in your wife
“The way will be to keep your oath,
“And honour her with arduous life.
“The women seldom break their vow:
“If you pay your’s, your joy in her—”
But Mrs. Fife, much flurried, now
Whisper’d, “Miss Honor’s ready, Sir.”

3.

“Adieu, dear, dear Papa, adieu!
“To-morrow I’ll write.” “No, Pet,—”
“I will!
“You know I’m very happy; and you,
“You’ve Mary and Mildred with you
still!

“Mary, you’ll make Papa his tea :

“No green, remember. Au revoir !

“Only six weeks! How soon ’twill be !”

Then on us two they shut the door.

I, disconcerted, tax’d my thought

To keep my Bride in countenance,

But, whilst for words I vainly sought,

Her voice released my own from trance.

“Look, is not this a handsome shawl ?”

“Yes !” “Aunt Maude gave it me.”

“How kind !”

“The new wing spoils Sir John’s old Hall :

“You’ll see it, if you pull that blind.”

XII.

BY THE SEA.

THE ACCOMPANIMENTS.

I.

A Demonstration.

NATURE, with endless being rife,
Parts each thing into "him" and
"her,"

And, in the arithmetic of life,

The smallest unit is a pair;

And thus, oh, strange, sweet half of me,

If I confess a loftier flame,

If more I love high Heaven than thee,

I more than love thee, thee I am;

And, if the world's not built of lies,

Nor all a cheat the Gospel tells;

If that which from the dead shall rise

Be I indeed, not something else,

There's no position more secure

In reason or in faith than this,

That those conditions must endure,

Which, wanting, I myself should miss.

II.

The Amaranth.

FEASTS satiate ; stars distress with
height ;

Friendship means well, but misses reach,
And wearies in it's best delight,

Vex'd with the vanities of speech ;
Too long regarded, roses even

Afflict the mind with fond unrest ;
And to converse direct with Heaven

Is a great trouble in the breast :
Whate'er the up-looking soul admires,

Whate'er the senses' banquet be,
Fatigues at last with vain desires,

Or sickens by satiety :

But truly my delight was more

In her to whom I am bound for aye

Yesterday than the day before

And more to-day than yesterday.

III.

Valedictory.

SHE whom the heavenly Books declare
The Crown and Glory of the man,
Is much too nearly dear my care
For me with sequent thoughts to scan:
From order and the Muse's laws
What wonder if I fondly err?
The wisest man that ever was
Became a fool for love of her.
In her prized interest yet I prove,
With words that ne'er shall be forgot,
Such perfect friends are truth and love
That neither lives where both are not.

Praise, then, my Book where'er it comes,
Ladies, whose innocence makes bright
England, the land of courtly homes,
The world's exemplar and delight!

IV.

The Sentences.

1.

BE not amaz'd at life. 'Tis still
The mode of God with his elect:
Their hopes exactly to fulfil,
In times and ways they least expect.

2.

Who marry as they choose, and choose
Not as they ought, they mock the Priest,
And, leaving out obedience, lose
The finest flavour of the feast.

3.

Till Eve was brought to Adam, he
A solitary desert trod,
Though in the great society
Of Nature, Angels, and of God.

IDYL XII.

BY THE SEA.

1.

I WHILE the shop-girl fitted on
, The sand-shoes, look'd where, down
the bay,

The sea glow'd with a shrouded sun.

“I'm ready, Felix; will you pay?”

That was my first expense for this

Sweet stranger whom I call'd my Wife :

How light the touches are that kiss

The music from the chords of life!

2.

Her feet, by half a mile of sea,
In spotless sand, left shapely prints ;
Then, from the beach, she loaded me
With agate-stones, which turn'd out flints ;
And, after that, we took a boat :
She wish'd to see the ships-of-war,
At anchor, each a lazy mote
Dotting the brilliance, miles from shore.

3.

A vigorous breeze the canvas fill'd,
Lifting us o'er the bright-ridged gulf,
And every lurch my darling thrill'd
With light fear smiling at itself :
And, dashing past the Arrogant,
Asleep upon the restless wave
After its cruise in the Levant,
We reach'd the Wolf ; and signal gave

For help to board: with caution meet,
My bride was placed within the chair,
The red-flag wrapp'd about her feet,
And so swung laughing through the air.

4

“Look, Love,” she said, “there’s Frederick
Graham,

“My Cousin, whom you met, you know.”
And, seeing us, the brave man came,

And made his frank and courteous bow,
And gave my hand a sailor’s shake,

And said, “You ask’d me to the Hurst:
“I never thought my luck would make
“You and your wife my guests the first.”
And Honor, cruel, “Nor did we:

“Have you not lately changed your
ship?”

“Yes: I’m commander, now,” said he,
With a slight quiver of the lip.

We saw the vessel, shown with pride ;
Took luncheon; I must eat his salt !
Parting he said, (I think my bride
Found him unselfish to a fault,)
His wish he saw had come to pass,
(And so, indeed, her face express'd,)
That that should be, whate'er it was,
Which made his Cousin happiest.
We left him looking from above,
Rich bankrupt! for he could afford
To say most proudly that his love
Was virtue and its own reward.
But others loved as well as he,
(Thought I, half-anger'd,) and, if fate,
Unfair, had only fashion'd me
As hapless, I had been as great.

5.

As souls, ambitious, but low-born,
If greatly raised by luck or wit,

All pride of place will proudly scorn,
And live as they'd been used to it,
So we two wore our strange estate:
Familiar, unaffected, free,
We talk'd, until the dusk grew late,
Of this and that; but, after tea,
As doubtful if a lot so sweet
As our's was our's in very sooth,
Like children, to promote conceit,
We feign'd that it was not the truth;
And she assumed the maiden coy,
And I adored remorseless charms,
And then we clapp'd our hands for joy,
And ran into each other's arms.

THE EPILOGUE.

THE EPILOGUE.

1.

“**I** DID not call you ‘Dear’ or ‘Love,’
“I think, till after Frank was born.”

“That fault I cannot well remove;

“The rhymes”—but Frank now blew his
horn,

And Walter bark’d, on hands and knees,

At Baby in the mignonette,

And all made, full cry, for the trees

Where Felix and his wife were set.

Again disturb'd, (crickets have cares!)

True to their annual use they rose,
To offer thanks at Evening Prayers
In three times sacred Sarum Close.

2.

They stopp'd to leave a gift of wine

At Widow Neale's. Her daughter said:

“She's sinking fast, Ma'am! For a sign,

“She cried just now, of him that's dead,

“‘Mary, he's somewhere close above,

“‘Weeping and wailing his dead wife,

“‘With forceful prayers and fatal love

“‘Conjuring me to come to life.

“‘A spirit is terrible though dear!

“‘It comes by night, and sucks my
breath,

“‘And draws me with desire and fear.’

“Ah, Ma'am, she'll soon be his in
death!”

3.

“O love makes death a dreadful thought!

“Felix, at what a price we live!”

But present pleasures soon forgot

The future's dread alternative;

For, as became the festal time,

Vaughan cheer'd his Wife with tender
praise,

And speeches wanting only rhyme

To make them like his lofty lays.

He scoff'd at mispraised girlhood: “What

“For sweetness like the ten years' wife,

“Whose customary love is not

“Her passion, or her play, but life!

“The best things that the best believe

“Are in her face so brightly writ,

“The faithless, seeing her, conceive

“Not only heaven, but hope of it.

“With beauties so maturely fair,

“Affecting, mild, and manifold,

“Can girlish charms no more compare
“Than nect’rines green with nect’rines
gold.”

4.

Her own and manhood’s modesty
Check’d praise of him, but, as they rode,
His hand in her’s felt soft reply,
And like rejoinder fond bestow’d.

5.

“Dear Wife,” said he, “A fresh-lit fire
“Sends forth to heaven great shows of
fume,
“And watchers far away admire;
“But, when the flames their power
assume,
“The more they burn the less they show;
“The clouds no longer smirch the sky;
“And then the flames intensest glow
“When far-off watchers think they die.

“The fumes of early love my verse
“Hath figured, but to paint the flame
“Might merit the Promethean curse,
“And is a task unknown to fame.”—
“The task you undertook was such:
“Do, Dear, go on!” and he (who cried,
“I could not love thee, Muse, so much
“‘Loved I not Honor more!’”) complied.
Then, as they talk’d of olden song,
“How strange,” said he, “’twould seem
to meet,
“When walking without thought along
“A Florence or a Lisbon street,
“That Laura or that Catherine, who,
“In the remote, romantic years,
“From Petrarch or Camoens drew
“Their verse and their immortal tears!”
But here their converse had it’s end;
For, crossing the Cathedral Lawn,

There came an ancient college-friend,
Who, introduced to Mrs. Vaughan,
Lifted his hat, and bow'd, and smiled,
And fill'd her handsome face with joy,
By patting on the cheek her child,
With, "Is he your's, this noble boy?"

END OF THE ESPOUSALS.





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